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is always fascinating, and we know of no more agreeable or better qualified person to guide the layman than Mr. Foster.

FICTION.

"Candles in the Wind"* is visible proof that learning does not make a novelist, and that the story-telling gift nine times out of ten is as much born and not made as the poet's. The book gives every evidence of wide reading, much knowledge gathered together, a carefully chosen plot, minutely described characters and, in the main, good English. The fact remains that the book is sown through with wide tracts of intolerable dullness, and somehow, in despite of all the author's pains, one does not very much care what becomes of any of the characters. It is, however, a conscientious piece of work and adds one more to the pictures of India we already have from Kipling and Mrs. Steele.

Elizabeth Robins has come home, in her latest novel,† and dealt with the familiar case of the loyal American a little homesick for foreign parts. She has taken an interesting relation between women for her situation, and for her theme the always tragical love between elder woman and younger man. The treatment is reticent, very delicate, not without charm. Isabel Roscoe accepts the only possible solution, and the reader, while regretful, is perforce content, reflects that life is so and that we can, like these three, make of it a thing unspoiled and believe that somehow the price is repaid in good for the race. The book advocates no party doctrines and wants neither humor nor story. It is serious, very womanly, noble and fortifying.

REPRINTS OF GREAT BOOKS.

Aubrey Beardsley, who died at Keats's age of Keats's malady, had, like Keats, a genius of the first rank. This rare and ex-

* "Candles in the Wind." By Maud Diver. New York: John Lane Company, 1909.

† "The Florentine Frame." By Elizabeth Robins. New York: Moffat, Yard & Co., 1909.

traordinary talent flowered early and came to fruit, but hardly ripened before it dropped untimely. It was mistrusted, unappreciated and, worst of all, mispraised. He was as out of place in late Victorian England as a discalced Carmelite or a ragged Yogi. He had a greater gift of line than Europe had borne for four centuries; his affinities were all with the misunderstood, the unknown East. And as line is of all plastic arts the least material in its influences, the drawings of this sick boy are extraordinarily moving and troubling. They stir men's souls in undreamed-of ways. If he chose at times a morbid theme, it was not for corruption's sake, but because they were novel and so long untouched as to be quite fresh; and his best work is invariably wholesome: swift and subtle and edifying, as all great beauty must be. Strange indeed it is, haunting and stirring our dull and earth-bound souls, drawing us out of our miry and stodgy ways to the infinite enlargement of our consciousness. And because he was before all else an artist, the worst of his work, which is the sickest, has far more of beauty than of malady in it. The work on the "*Morte d'Arthur*,"* an early commission, dragged on through the whole of his short working life and mingles all strains and all styles. Here and there in the decorations a motive may occur too pagan or too *rococo* to suit the book it nominally illustrates, but for the most part the pages (as they turn) satisfy profoundly. Take for delicacy of line "Arthur and the Strange Mantle," or for Arabian fantasy "The Questing Beast," or for the brilliancy of the blacks "Morgan le Fay and Sir Tristram." Here is miraculous design and composition on every leaf. Here is work in white on black, in black on white, in pure line. Here in a square inch are words and gardens that you breathe the odor of; waters that you feel the winds across; the ominous light of stormy skies; the radiant calm of quiet sunsettings; the hush of twilight over folded hills. It is the record for who can read of infinite possibilities, rare, precious, unfulfilled.

The letterpress of the volume is beautiful enough to match the wonderful drawings, and the text follows exactly Sir Thomas Malory's as imprinted by William Caxton in 1485, the only change being modernized spelling. As a whole, there could be

* "*Le Morte d'Arthur*." By Sir Thomas Malory, Kt. Introduction by Professor Rhys and illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1909.

no more adequate and delightful reprint of the great romantic tales.

Hard were it to say in what these "Italian Hours"* of Mr. James are most beautiful—pictures or text or informing spirit. They have the serenity of a wise and perfect maturity, and yet they have the scrupulous and self-conscious enjoyment that only youth is equal to. What with reminiscences and what with post-scripts, they cover at least forty years. Yet how they are of a piece! Their finest quality, perhaps, as it is the rarest in the world, is just the expression more than anything else of an attitude towards life. And such an attitude!—a sort of wise passiveness, a receptivity that accepts the moment for the moment's own sake. The attitude is unimpassioned to the pitch of intensity and catholic to the brink of indifference, and so charged with the sense of life that it affords no margin for incident or event. For better and for worse the hours have massed themselves, in the main, about that ripe and golden middle period—may one say also, where the book is so acutely personal, that golden and ripe middle age?—which many who profess themselves the author's lovers profess to love best among his "manners" and "periods." It is for better by reason of the deliberate, candid, serene apprehension of the multiplicity of life and the equipoise of interests; for worse by the conscious shrinking from the pang of possible passions, and the curious consequent delusion which we remember the late Matthew Arnold to have shared, that the middle age might have been dull. But let the passion only pass from the heart to the head, and who so passionate as our author in every exquisite sensibility? Here, as always, he stands fast by his American colors, his original American judgments of what is and is not, in respect of a moral citizenship, possible. He may sigh for the cardinal's purple stockings, but never for the temporal papacy; he may deplore the ugliness of the Piazza Michael Angelo, but never the routing out of the Mercato Vecchio. He has the tenderest deprecations, the sweetest charity, for the Kingdom of Italy and the needs of the Italian. The hours are

* "Italian Hours." By Henry James, with illustrations in color by Joseph Pennell. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1909.